3 Sustainable Leadership in Multi-Cultural Teams

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Learning outcomes

By completing this chapter the reader should be able to

- Discuss the difference between leaders acting global and being global.
- Discuss the concept of cultural intelligence in the context of leadership.
- Explain the main components of the adaptable and sustainable leadership framework
- Demonstrate the ability to implement the framework for sustainable and adaptive leadership

Introduction

The current shift towards digital transformation that guides the building blocks of the digital economy, has made it imperative to review some of the current theories, frameworks and paradigms. This applies to the different contexts of business management, where effective leadership is crucail, including project management and more so, sustainable project management. The authors' current work, which is directed at both academics and practitioners, calls for a new paradigm in approaching Sustainable Leadership Effectiveness, that brings aspects from three knowledge domains (Anthropology, Sociology and Psychology) which are important for understanding human behaviors (in response to Murdock, 1971). The new paradigm and approach take leadership effectiveness practice, training and development into new dimensions, and embed them within an intelligent process with the Douglasian Cultural Framework (DCF)-based Cultural Intelligence at

the center. Leaders focus should harness past and present experience to make a better future (Senge, 2008 cited in Tideman et al., 2013). This implies that for leadership to be considered sustainable, it must be formed around two important factors: adaptability and intelligence (Tideman, 2013). Accordingly, the journey that readers will be guided through in this chapter, is about novelty in thinking and practicing leadership which is different from the mainstream of leadership and Cultural Intelligence discourse and practice. The aim is to have managers and leaders not only understanding how to be effective, but how to behave intelligently in a challenging global context. In the introduction, the chapter presents the debate about leadership from the globalization lens, illustrating the obstacles that leadership research is facing. The chapter then provides the reader with a general review about Cultural Intelligence showing the dilemmas that the construct is facing, leading to the main theme of this chapter where the leadership adaptability framework is presented.

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Historical background

Leadership has passed through a difficult trajectory since the end of the nineteenth century until today (Van Seters and Field, 1990). It starts with the personality era moving to the influence era, behavioral era, situation era, contingency era, transactional era, anti-leadership era, culture era and transformational era. An important observation one can notice is that, in the focus of most of the eras, leadership research reacts to leaders' traits or behaviors in different contexts. There is no comprehensive theory of leadership that can be applied at all times in all contexts. The era of global leadership is not so different from those in the past.

The shift in mindset: The difference between acting and being global

Management scholars such as Cabrera and Unruh (2012) have been calling for the development of global leaders, in the era of the global economy, where the whole world is interconnected and tremendously complex. These scholars argue that being global is no longer an option if companies decide to work outside their homeland environment, rather it is an imperative. Cabrera and Unruh (2012) also refer to a dilemma that individuals and organizations face nowadays in getting prepared to deal with others across national borders. There is a difference between acting global and being global: a difference that must touch people's behaviors and not only their thinking; a difference that manifests in listening to and understanding others in other contexts, instead of applying Western-oriented frameworks (Biermeier-Hanson et al., 2015); and finally, a difference between judging others' actions according to our own set of values and suspending our judgement to learn from others in context-specific encounters. Basically, a shift in the mindset of individuals and organizations must happen in order to achieve this (Cabrera and Unruh, 2012).

Other scholars such as Gupta and Govindarajan (2002) define global mindset as the ability to utilize and interpret criteria and performance across a wide array of cross-cultural contexts (cited in Biermeier-Hanson et al., 2015). Once again, Biermeier-Hanson et al. (2015) describe how reactive leadership continues to be, while there is a need to create leaders with global mindsets who can respond to global market needs. The authors argue that this is backboned by technology advancement, and hence, organizations find themselves obliged to change their behavior to cope with it.

In response to the globalization phenomena, many scholars started developing parameters and competencies taxonomies for global leaders, so that companies can start deploying them. Caligiuri (2006) identifies four areas of focus: knowledge, skills, abilities and other personality characteristics (KSAO) for potential global leaders. Such competencies are viewed as prerequisites for somebody to succeed in specific jobs, occupations, or roles (Campion et al., 2011; Shippmann et al., 2000 and Stevens, 2012 cited in Mendenhall et al., 2017). Silong et al. (2015) argue that those who are culturally intelligent have better potential to become global leaders due to their understanding of global diversity. Caligiuri (2013) adds contextual factors to global leaders' competencies list. This includes: effectively managing complex global environments; the capabilities to negotiate cultural challenges and conflicts; and also understanding regulatory conflicting requirements, unforeseen costs and stakeholders' diversity (cited in Silong et al., 2015). Other scholars call to create a model for global leadership that considers a set of competencies that focuses on personality traits, general self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation drivers to push people to work abroad (Chattanooga Model, 2001, cited in Mendenhall et al., 2017).

Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

The concept of Cultural Intelligence (CQ), which is considered as a competency of the effective leader (Rockstuhl et al., 2011), in its current form and structure failed to provide practitioners with the tools that it promised. The reason behind this dilemma is CQ's reliance on astatic culture, based on national background and race. This dilemma led to scholars (Blasco et al, 2012) arguing that CQ as a construct failed to achieve its goal and did not permit those who work outside their homeland to benefit from it. Blasco et al. (2012) also reached a conclusion that one can only understand culture as a product of social interaction, or as physical experiences and their interpretation, as opposed to knowledge. This approach becomes the crucial factor in CQ (Blasco et al., 2012). Other scholars argue that the CQ construct fails to clarify or present the mechanism required to perform the metacognitive processes, i.e. planning, reviewing and checking, and to question the capability of CQ to be useful to practitioners (e.g. Salih, 2017).